

in which to review the local budget. In addition, the local authority to pass a budget would be suspended during any periods of poor financial condition that would trigger a control year.

Having the locally elected officials of those providing the funds that are the subject of the budget process decide on how those funds should be spent is a matter of simple fairness. There are also the practical difficulties that the current system causes when the local budget is not approved until well into the fiscal year. By enacting this bill, Congress would be appropriately carrying out its constitutional duties with respect to the District by improving the city's ability to better plan, manage and run its local programs and services. This is what the taxpayers of the District of Columbia have elected their local officials to do.

The legislation also includes the District of Columbia Independence of the Chief Financial Officer Act of 2005 which would make permanent the authority of the District of Columbia Chief Financial Officer. The current Chief Financial Officer for the District of Columbia is operating under authority it derived from the D.C. Control Board, which is currently dormant due to the city's improved financial situation. That authority was set to sunset when the D.C. Control Board was phased out; however, the CFO's authority continues to be extended through the appropriations process, until such time as permanent legislation is enacted.

Ensuring continued financial accountability of the D.C. government is crucial for the fiscal stability of the city. The CFO has played a significant role in maintaining this stability. While providing the District with more autonomy over its budgets, it is also important that the CFO's authority is made permanent and that its role is clear.

I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida:

S. 801. A bill to designate the United States courthouse located at 300 North Hogan Street, Jacksonville, Florida, as the "John Milton Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, today I rise to introduce a bill designating a Jacksonville courthouse as the John Milton Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse.

John Milton Bryan Simpson was born in Kissimmee, FL, in 1903. He was nominated to the Southern District Court of Florida by President Truman in 1950 and to the Federal court of appeals by President Johnson in 1966.

Designating this courthouse after the late Judge Simpson is a fitting tribute to a man whose judicial decisions were instrumental in desegregating public facilities in Jacksonville, Orlando, and Daytona Beach.

It is important that we remember not only his name but also his legacy

of courage during that period of our history.

I hope that other members of the Senate will join me in honoring Judge Simpson, a man who was not only a hero to the state of Florida, but a national hero.

By Mr. DOMENICI (for himself, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BURNS, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. SMITH, Mr. HAGEL, and Mr. BROWNBACK):

S. 802. A bill to establish a National Drought Council within the Department of Agriculture, to improve national drought preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce The National Drought Preparedness Act of 2005. First off, I would like to thank Senator BAUCUS. As the lead cosponsor, his strong leadership and hard work on this bill has been a tremendous help.

Drought is a unique emergency situation; it creeps in unlike other abrupt weather disasters. Without a national drought policy we constantly live not knowing what the next year will bring. Unfortunately, when we find ourselves facing a drought, towns often scramble to drill new water wells, fires often sweep across bone dry forests and farmers and ranchers are forced to watch their way of life blow away with the dust.

We must be vigilant and prepare ourselves for quick action when the next drought cycle begins. Better planning on our part could limit some of the damage felt by drought. I submit that this bill is the exact tool needed for facilitating better planning.

This Act establishes a National Drought Council within the Department of Agriculture to improve national drought preparedness, mitigation and response efforts. The National Drought Council will formulate strategies to alleviate the effects of drought by fostering a greater understanding of what triggers wide-spread drought conditions. By educating the public in water conservation and proper land stewardship, we can ensure a better preparedness when future drought plagues our country.

The impacts of drought are also very costly. According to NOAA, there have been 12 different drought events since 1980 that resulted in damages and costs exceeding \$1 billion each. In 2000, severe drought in the South-Central and Southeastern states caused losses to agriculture and related industries of over \$4 billion. Western wildfires that year totaled over \$2 billion in damages. The Eastern drought in 1999 led to \$1 billion in losses. These are just a few of the statistics.

While drought affects the economic and environmental well being of the entire nation, the United States has lacked a cohesive strategy for dealing with serious drought emergencies. As

many of you know, the impact of drought emerges gradually rather than suddenly as is the case with other natural disasters.

I am pleased to be following through on what I started in 1997. The bill that we are introducing today is the next step in implementing a national, cohesive drought policy. The bill recognizes that drought is a recurring phenomenon that causes serious economic and environmental loss and that a national drought policy is needed to ensure an integrated, coordinated strategy.

The National Drought Preparedness Act of 2005 does the following: It creates national policy for drought. This will hopefully move the country away from the costly, ad hoc, response-oriented approach to drought, and move us toward a pro-active, preparedness approach. The new national policy would provide the tools and focus, similar to the Stafford Act, for Federal, State, tribal and local governments to address the diverse impacts and costs caused by drought.

The Bill would improve delivery of federal drought programs. This would ensure improved program delivery, integration and leadership. To achieve this intended purpose, the bill establishes the National Drought Council, designating USDA as the lead federal agency. The Council and USDA would provide the coordinating and integrating function for federal drought programs, much like FEMA provides that function for other natural disasters under the Stafford Act.

The Act will provide new tools for drought preparedness planning. Building on existing policy and planning processes, the bill would assist states, local governments, tribes, and other entities in the development and implementation of drought preparedness plans. The bill does not mandate state and local planning, but is intended to facilitate plan development and implementation through establishment of the Drought Assistance Fund.

The bill would improve forecasting & monitoring by facilitating the development of the National Drought Monitoring Network in order to improve the characterization of current drought conditions and the forecasting of future droughts. Ultimately, this would provide a better basis to "trigger" federal drought assistance.

Finally, the bill would authorize the USDA to provide reimbursement to states for reasonable staging and prepositioning costs when there is a threat of a wildfire.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 802

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,